
PARENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Hill View Montessori Charter Public School places tremendous value on grace, courtesy, respect and responsibility. As such, we encourage parents/guardians and staff to develop open lines of communication with each other for the benefit of the children attending the school. If a parent/guardian is not satisfied with a staff or faculty or administration decision or action, they should follow the complaint process detailed below.

Complaints should be resolved as close to their source as possible. Members of the HVM school community involved in a dispute are encouraged to deal directly with the other party involved. Members of the HVM school community will be expected to make all reasonable efforts to reach a solution that is acceptable to all parties involved. A complaint should only move to a higher level of authority after direct communications between those initially involved fail to produce a resolution.

Parents bringing a complaint involving an HVM employee should be aware that the Executive Director holds primary responsibility and authority for the oversight and employment of the school staff. The Board of Trustees is not involved directly in the normal hiring, firing, or other management of any school staff or employees other than the Executive Director her/himself.

Steps of HVM's Parent Complaint Process:

Step #1: A parent, guardian, or other individuals or groups should contact those directly involved in the issue or decision. With concerns relating to a student, begin by speaking with the lead teacher, subject or specials teacher, support staff, administrative staff, or outside contractor (such as Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, School Psychologist). Communicate the complaint as clearly as possible, and identify actions that will lead to a resolution of the issue. Work in a cooperative environment to resolve the complaint based upon the actions identified.

Step #2: If the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, speak with HVM's Executive Director and communicate the complaint as clearly as possible and identify actions that will lead to a resolution of the issue. Any such plan may require review and revision during the process.

Step #3: If the complaint remains unresolved after providing the Executive Director a reasonable amount of time to bring a resolution to bear, the complainant(s) may notify the Chair of the HVM Board of Trustees. The Board Chair can be contacted at HVMBOTChair@hvmcps.org. A written communication detailing the specifics of the complaint **must be** formally submitted to the Board Chair. The written communication must clearly document the efforts made to comply with Step #1 and Step #2 of this complaint process. Each party named in your complaint will receive a copy of your written communication.

Step #4: The written complaint formally submitted to the Board Chair will be reviewed by an ad hoc (temporary) Complaint Committee of the Board of Trustees. If the committee believes that more effort can reasonably be made to resolve the issue at the staff or Executive Director level, it will return the complaint to the appropriate level. The committee will provide a written response to all parties involved in the complaint within 10 (ten) days of receiving the formal complaint.

If the ad hoc Board Complaint Committee finds that Steps #1 and #2 of this process have been exhausted, it will schedule meetings with all parties involved in the complaint. The purpose of these meetings will be to gather information, determine specific points of conflict, and identify possible solutions. The Board Complaint Committee will review the conduct, decisions, actions, and any policies that may be involved in the complaint.

The ad hoc Board Complaint Committee may, if appropriate, schedule a meeting that includes all parties in order to mediate an acceptable resolution. Alternatively, the committee may reach conclusions regarding merits of the complaint and present its own recommendation[s] and resolution[s]. The Board Complaint Committee will issue a formal written response to the complaint at the end of this process. The Complaint Committee will attempt to issue its report within 30 (thirty) days of receipt of the formal written complaint, but each complaint will warrant its own schedule and timeline.

Step #5: After completion of its work and the issuance of its final report, the ad hoc Board Complaint Committee will report to the full Board of Trustees and present an executive summary of the complaint and its resolution. If necessary, the Board of Trustees may be asked by the Complaint Committee to vote on policy or other action items arising from the Complaint Committee's conclusions.

A complaining party who believes their complaint has not been adequately addressed by the ad hoc Complaint Committee of the HVM Board of Trustees can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education. The laws governing Massachusetts Charter Schools are M.G.L. c. 71 section 89, and 603 CMR 1.00. (A copy of these laws will be provided by Hill View Montessori Charter Public School upon request.)

Authority and Role of the Board of Trustees' ad hoc Complaint Committee:

The role of the Board's ad hoc Complaint Committee is to review a complaint that has not been resolved at the staff or administrative levels. The Complaint Committee must balance their duty to protect the interests of the Charter and the Charter school as a whole with the concerns of the party filing the complaint. In general, it is the opinion of the Board of Trustees that the interests of the Charter School and those of the individuals within the school community should coincide if viewed from an appropriate distance. It is the job of this committee to find and take such a view. The committee can make recommendations to any party for corrective action. In cases where the committee feels the scope of the dispute warrants the opinion or review of the full Board of Trustees, the committee will prepare its conclusions, present them to the Board, and request a vote.

To these ends, the ad hoc Complaint Committee is authorized by the full Board to review the conduct, relative to a specific complaint, of all employees and representatives of Hill View Montessori Charter Public School. The Complaint Committee shall be authorized to make recommendations designed to resolve existing complaints (and avoid future complaints) regarding staff conduct, educational policies, and administration actions. The Complaint Committee shall also have the authority to review the actions of any parent, student, or any other individual or group involved in a formal written complaint.

Notes Regarding the Nature of the Complaint Process

The HVM Board of Trustees recognizes that any complaint or issue that reaches the Board Complaint Committee level will naturally have a strong emotional element. It is the job of those on this temporary committee to evaluate the issue in a thoughtful and respectful manner, without allowing the emotions involved to overwhelm their review of the information. The Complaint Committee will be as impartial as possible and strive not to prejudge any individual or situation. Any party involved in a complaint should be prepared to present a factual account of the situation, to remain respectful of other people and other perspectives, and to allow the committee reasonable time to do its work.

The Complaint Committee will respect this separation of responsibilities, and may ask the parties to return to the Executive Director to achieve a resolution of staff/faculty-related issues. This does not preclude the Complaint Committee, with a supporting vote from the Board, from making an employment/employee-related decision in cases where such is warranted.